

VZCZCXRO3334

PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #1089/01 0720809

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 130809Z MAR 07

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1560

INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY

RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC//J5//

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI

RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA//

RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA//J5/J021//

RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA

RUAYJAA/COMPATWING ONE KAMI SEYA JA

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 2652

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 0177

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 3681

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 9574

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 1143

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6109

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2198

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3524

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 11 TOKYO 001089

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR E, P, EB, EAP/J, EAP/P, EAP/PD, PA
WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST DIVISION;
TREASURY/OASIA/IMI/JAPAN; DEPT PASS USTR/PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
SECDEF FOR JCS-J-5/JAPAN,
DASD/ISA/EAPR/JAPAN; DEPT PASS ELECTRONICALLY TO USDA
FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR;
CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 03/13/07-1

INDEX:

(1) Prime Minister Abe now showing true colors, alarming New Komeito

(2) Minshuto ready to launch attack against LDP over Matsuoka's huge utilities bills, focusing on fund reports, Diet replies, responsibility for appointment

(3) Perception gap between LDP, New Komeito, with eye on elections; Passage of national referendum bill in Lower House likely in or after April

(4) Poll: 26% concerned about low birthrate, 23% interested in economy

(5) US Japan experts concerned about Prime Minister Abe's remarks about comfort-women issue

(6) American publisher releases book refuting Beijing's claim that 300,000 civilians were killed in Nanking Incident

(7) Editorial: Comfort women issue-Doing nothing about falsified history is turning a blind eye to future trouble

(8) Prime Minister Abe's remarks on comfort women issue come under fire from inside and outside Japan

(9) Government decides to refrain from counterargument over comfort women issue

ARTICLES:

(1) Prime Minister Abe now showing true colors, alarming New Komeito

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
March 9, 2007

Toshinari Etori

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) junior coalition partner, New Komeito is puzzled about how to keep in step with Prime Minister Abe because of his recent desire to "go back to the starting line." Abe has recently inserted himself into intricate or sensitive problems. One typical case was his allowing the reinstatement of former House of Representatives member Seiichi Eto into the LDP. In addition, the LDP, which is now playing hardball, in line with Abe's wishes, and is rushing to pass the national referendum bill through the Diet, likewise makes the New Komeito nervous. The New Komeito's irritation with the LDP seems likely to continue, particularly with the approaching national elections that will pit one political party against another.

Eto's reinstatement in LDP intensifies New Komeito's distrust of Abe, LDP

The New Komeito's nervousness about the LDP's actions started with question of whether the party would let Eto would be allowed to return to the LDP. The New Komeito was opposed to Eto's return to the fold out of fear that cooperation in the upcoming Upper House election could collapse. But Abe prioritized his friendship toward Eto over consideration for the New Komeito. Eto and Abe are old

TOKYO 00001089 002 OF 011

friends sharing the same view of history; both also want constitutional revision. This also irritates the New Komeito.

At a time when Abe formed his administration, some in the New Komeito were concerned about the prime minister's "right-wing" nature. But Abe has refrained from repeating his pet arguments on historical issues and Yasukuni Shrine and instead held early meetings with the leaders of China and South Korea. At the time, many in the New Komeito began to view Abe this way: "He is willing to listen to the views of others." But, Abe's recent "move to "return to his own starting line" is alarming the New Komeito, with one senior party member noting, "I wonder whether he may be trying to remove the gap between what he stated before taking office as prime minister and what he has been doing as prime minister."

The thought of Abe's returning to his basic line seems to have alarmed the New Komeito. It fears it may be rendered obsolete by the two major parties, the LDP and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto).

New Komeito's move may delay the passage of national referendum bill in Lower House

The Lower House Special Committee on the Constitution yesterday cancelled a meeting planned for that day to set up a date for a hearing. This cancellation was decided by the committee's Chairman Nakayama (of the LDP), because both board members of the LDP and Minshuto were absent from the board meeting that day and also because the New Komeito was negative about escalating confrontation between the ruling parties and the Minshuto. The LDP, which thinks a week or so delay is unavoidable, intends to single-handedly add changes to the national referendum bill and aim to pass it through the Lower House by the end of the month. But, depending on the Minshuto's response to the revised bill and the New Komeito's judgment on it, the passage of the revised bill in the Lower House may be delayed to April.

New Komeito caught in dilemma over election cooperation

The New Komeito is placing priority on the unified local elections in April.

Given that important event, the party wishes to avoid any questioning of the ruling parties and any policies that would irritate its supporters. A senior New Komeito member in this regard expressed concern: "If the Diet were thrown into turmoil by a vote-taking on the national referendum bill, it would have a significant impact on the upcoming elections."

The New Komeito was opposed to the LDP's reinstatement of Eto in the party primarily because of the upcoming elections. Eto's running for an Upper House seat in a proportional representation bloc would take away some of the votes supposed to be cast for a New Komeito candidate.

But the New Komeito leadership was quick to calm down internal objections to Eto's reinstatement in the LDP. Touching on Eto's rejoining the LDP, New Komeito Secretary General Kitagawa noted: "The process of how to build a cooperative relationship with his electorate is likely to start now." After that, no criticism has been voiced openly in the party.

The party's quick move to quiet down objections is attributable to

TOKYO 00001089 003 OF 011

amalgamation of the LDP and the New Komeito over cooperation in national elections. The New Komeito long struggled to increase the number of votes it won in the proportional representation portion of the election to the 7 million level. After joining the coalition government with the LDP, the New Komeito was able to raise the level of votes captured to the 8 million level in 2001. Then, in 2004, the number of votes for its candidates increased to 8,620,000.

In order for the New Komeito to keep the 13 Upper House seats up for grabs in the elections this summer, it is imperative to gain the LDP's support for New Komeito candidates expected to run in five constituencies, as well as the LDP support for the New Komeito in the proportional representation races.

Given that this sort of cooperation has the same pattern in the Lower House elections, the New Komeito cannot turn back. The challenge facing the party at present is how to find a common ground with the prime minister while avoiding causing discord.

Mid-level lawmakers of the New Komeito, who aim to build a new communication channel with the Prime Minister's Official Residence, recently dined with the prime minister. One of them said: "This kind of association will allow us to talk to each other without reserve."

(2) Minshuto ready to launch attack against LDP over Matsuoka's huge utilities bills, focusing on fund reports, Diet replies, responsibility for appointment

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)
March 12, 2007

"Why is 5 million yen in utilities charges needed annually in a rent-free suite in a Diet members' office building?" To this question made in a House of Councillors' Budget Committee meeting yesterday, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Toshikatsu Matsuoka refused to give an explanation. Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) intends to call for Matsuoka to be summoned to the Diet as a sworn witness over his political fund organization's allegedly bogus reports. The main opposition is ready to grill the Liberal Democratic Party over the Matsuoka scandal in the ongoing Diet session, focusing also on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's responsibility for appointing him.

In the Upper House meeting yesterday, Matsuoka only replied, "I have reported properly what should be reported," refusing to give no detailed explanation.

During a meeting of the said committee on March 5, Matsuoka said that expenses for a water purifier and heating equipment were added to the utilities bills. According to a veteran secretary, however, "Such spending should be listed as equipment and consumables

costs."

On the morning of March 9, a Minshuto member visited the office of Matsuoka's fund organization. But the member found no water purifier in the office. An Upper House member animatedly said, "If he unveils this fact, his office's misstatement will be discovered. If he refuses to reveal it, he will be accused of having told a lie in a Diet session."

In the meeting yesterday, Minshuto member Kiichiro Asao asked for Prime Minister Abe's view as the one who appointed Matsuoka to head

TOKYO 00001089 004 OF 011

the agriculture ministry. In response, the prime minister said, "(Matsuoka) has made reports in compliance with law." Minshuto intends to "continue grilling the LDP with the three points of Matsuoka's falsified reports and Diet replies, as well as the prime minister's responsibility for appointing him as a set," a mid-ranking lawmaker said.

(3) Perception gap between LDP, New Komeito, with eye on elections; Passage of national referendum bill in Lower House likely in or after April

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
March 13, 2007

It is now certain that the budget bill for next fiscal year will be given the Diet's final approval within this fiscal year (which ends at the end of March). Under such a situation, a perception gap has begun to stand out between the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito over pending issues. Over the national referendum bill, many members of the New Komeito, keeping the coming unified local elections in mind, are calling for prudence about a forcible approach in the Diet. Given this, the passage of the bill in the House of Representatives is likely to slip to April or later. The New Komeito is also dissatisfied with the LDP's responses to the office expense scandal involving Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Toshikatsu Matsuoka, as well as its decision to reinstate Seiichi Eto in the party and to support his candidacy under the proportional representation segment. Should the gap between the two ruling parties widen, Prime Minister Abe might lose even more political strength.

Prime Minister Abe said (on March 11) that he would not stick to the idea of passing the bill by May 3. New Komeito President Akihiro Ota defined the prime minister's remark as natural, saying before reporter early yesterday afternoon: "I have repeatedly talked about it."

Concern about forced passage

The leaderships of the LDP and the New Komeito affirmed in February that they aimed at having the national referendum bill passed the current session by Constitution Day. Minshuto, though, declined their offer to jointly rewrite the bill. In response, some New Komeito members began to take this view: "We should refrain from taking a vote in a forcible manner before the first half of the unified local elections on April 8." The bill is unlikely to be clear the Lower House by the end of March.

Cool responses to Matsuoka's Diet replies

The office of Agricultural Minister Matsuoka's political fund organization is located in the Diet members' Office Building, which does not charge utilities. But the office management earmarked a total of about 28.8 million yen as utilities charges over the five years up to 2005. The opposition bloc has seized on this issue as "unnatural."

In a meeting of the House of Councillors' Budget Committee yesterday, as well, Matsuoka just said, "I have submitted everything that is required under the Political Funds Control Law." Many members in the New Komeito, which place "integrity" as its guiding principle, take the view that "there is no need to defend him." Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yoshio Urushibara also said coolly, "I do

not think his explanation was fully convincing."

As measures to increase transparency regarding office expenses, Ota referred again to a revision of the Political Funds Control Law, saying, "A systemic reform is necessary in the current Diet session." In the LDP, however, many are calling for dealing with the situation by tightening its domestic rules.

Doubt about support for Eto

The LDP's Election Committee's sub-commission unofficially decided in its meeting yesterday to support reinstated Eto, a postal rebel, as its candidate under the proportional representation segment. But one participant said, "I want proper steps to be taken so that a negative impact will not appear in the Upper House election."

The New Komeito is concerned that the number of votes for its candidates for proportional representation seats in Kyushu could decrease due to Eto's candidacy. The LDP solicited an agreement from Eto to refrain from staging a campaign in Oita, his electoral district, but the New Komeito is still skeptical of the agreement. A senior member of the LDP's coalition partner said, "After ascertaining what moves Mr. Eto takes, we will consider" whether to support LDP candidates in single-seat constituencies."

(4) Poll: 26% concerned about low birthrate, 23% interested in economy

TOKYO (Page 1) (Abridged)
March 12, 2007

The Japan Polling Organization conducted a face-to-face nationwide public opinion survey on March 3-4 to probe public interest in the nation's 16th quadrennial local elections to be held in April. As major points at issue in the upcoming local elections, 26% picked "aging populations with dwindling fertility rates, welfare," with 23% preferring "economic and employment measures." As seen from these figures, the nation's voting population wants the elections to focus on issues close to their daily lives.

Among other issues, "fiscal problems," such as the fiscal bankruptcy of Yubari City in Hokkaido, accounted for 17%, with "social divide" reaching 9%. "Education," a pillar of the Abe cabinet's policy agenda, accounted for 8%. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party is laying emphasis on the modality of "public service personnel," but this issue accounted for only 4%. The LDP was apart from public opinion. The issue of "politics and money" was at 8%.

Respondents were asked pick one or more they would consider in voting. To this question, "manifesto, policies, principles" topped all other answers at 50%. "Political actions" also accounted for 47%. It may safely be said that voters want candidates to fulfill their policies and translate them into action.

Polling methodology: For the survey, a total of 3,000 persons were sampled out of males and females aged 20 and over at 250 locations throughout the country on a stratified two-stage random-sampling basis, so as to epitomize the nation's voting population of more than a 100 million. The survey was conducted by the Japan Polling Organization over a period of two days, March 3-4, on a face-to-face interview basis. Answers were obtained from 1,778 persons, excluding those who could not be interviewed because of their having moved away or being on a trip, or for other reasons. The retrieval rate

was 59.3%. In the breakdown of respondents, males accounted for 49.6%, and females 50.4%.

(5) US Japan experts concerned about Prime Minister Abe's remarks about comfort-women issue

March 10, 2007

Yoichi Kato, Washington

A controversy has erupted in the United States over the issue of Japan's wartime comfort women. The New York Times and other major US dailies carried editorials criticizing the Japanese government. Support for a resolution now before the US House of Representatives that demands a formal apology from Japan is now reportedly growing in the Congress. American experts on Japan affairs are becoming increasingly alarmed at the situation. Some are now calling on the Abe administration to respond in some form.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on March 1 made this comment about the House resolution: "The truth is that there was no evidence that the Imperial Japanese Army used coercion (to force women into prostitution at frontline brothels)." Abe's remark has served to strengthen congressional support for the resolution.

Michael Green, who served as a senior director for Asian affairs on the National Security Council at the White House until the end of 2005, said: "Last week, many members of the House opposed the draft resolution, but (due to Prime Minister Abe's comment) all of them this week changed their position to support the resolution."

The State Department this week reportedly stopped briefing lawmakers on Japan's efforts.

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Campbell, who had just returned home from Japan, stated on March 6: "Japan watchers and supporters in the US are disappointed and perplexed (by Abe's remark)." He pointed out:

"The US lauds Japan for having issued various declarations (including the Kono Statement), in the past, but the problem is that China, South Korea and other countries critical of Japan, have raised doubts about such efforts."

He gave this warning: "Support for Japan in the US will decrease if Japan continues to hold this position."

Green, who is now visiting Japan, pointed out:

"The question of whether the Imperial Japanese Army coerced women into sexual slavery has nothing to do with it. Outside of Japan, nobody is interested in that point. The question is the tragic picture that the comfort women's experiences reveal. Japanese politicians have forgotten that basic fact."

Green said that as a result of this situation, criticism has welled up toward Japan in the US, but "no one is hearing any sympathetic words from Japan for the victims." He regards this issue as more serious than the beef import issue and the realignment of US bases in Okinawa.

Green proposed three measures that Japan should take: 1) Even if the

TOKYO 00001089 007 OF 011

US House of Representatives adopts the resolution, do not rebut it; 2) Leave the Kono Statement alone; and 3) The prime minister and foreign minister should express understanding and sympathy toward the victims.

US Ambassador Thomas Schieffer told an Asahi Shimbun reporter on March 9 at his official residence in Tokyo: "Although the draft resolution has no binding force, it is a mistake for Japan to underestimate the effect of this issue in the US. The ambassador then added: "There are no friends of Japan in the US who want Japan to back away from the Kono Statement." He sought to constrain a move in the LDP calling for a review of the Kono Statement.

(6) American publisher releases book refuting Beijing's claim that 300,000 civilians were killed in Nanking Incident

SANKEI (Page 3) (Abridged)
March 11, 2007

Yoshihisa Komori, Washington

An English translation of a Japanese book rejecting Beijing's claim that 300,000 persons had been killed in the Nanjing Massacre came out this past February from a prestigious American publisher specialized in academic books. It is the first book published in the United States reflecting the Japanese view of the Nanking Incident. The book is expected to create a stir in US research circles and others debating this historical issue.

The book in question is *The Politics of Nanjing: An Impartial Investigation* by Minoru Kitamura, a professor of history at Ritsumeikan University, published by University Press of America (UPA). Kitamura, a well-known historian who is an expert on China, published in 2001 a book titled *Nankin Jiken no Tankyu* (Research on the Nanking Incident) by Bungei Shinsho based on new data on the National Party and other matters. In publishing *The Politics of Nanjing* in the United States, Kitanuma partially rewrote *Nankin Jiken no Tankyu* and added some details to it. The book was translated by Hal Gold, an American doing historical research who is a long-time resident of Japan.

Based on a cache of historical documents discovered in Nanjing, Taiwan, and other places, *The Politics of Nanjing* admits that the Imperial Japanese Army killed a large number of Chinese prisoners of war. At the same time, it refutes Beijing's claim, noting: "China's assertion that the Japanese army planned and massacred over 300,000 Chinese civilians is groundless."

An English translation of another book on the Nanjing Incident by Katsuichi Honda, a former Asahi Shimbun reporter, was published in the United States ahead of *The Politics of Nanjing*. Except for the one by Honda, all books were either put out by Japanese publishers in the United States or published at the author's own expense. In many parts, Honda's book resonates with the assertions of Chinese authorities. In that context, Kitamura's book is the first book published in the United States that brushes aside China's claim.

Publications by UPA, a major American publisher of academic and scholarly monographs in humanities and social sciences with solid channels to colleges and university, research institutes, and libraries across the country, are used as textbooks and references. York University Professor Joshua Fogel, a leading scholar of modern Asian studies who specializes in Chinese-Japanese cross-cultural

TOKYO 00001089 008 OF 011

connections, took this view about *The Politics of Nanjing*: "Although I don't agree with some points in the book, it will be used widely by researchers and scholars in English-speaking societies."

This year, which marks the 70 anniversary of the Nanking Incident, Chinese authorities are planning many events denouncing the incident. Some documentary films on the incident have been produced in the United States, as well. Kitamura's book is expected to contribute to normalizing the debate on the incident as a rare English-language material depicting a Japanese view. Kitamura is scheduled to deliver a speech on his book at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan on April 2.

ThinkFilm plans to release *Nanking* at year's end

Hideya Yamamoto, Washington

ThinkFilm, a New York-based film distribution company, revealed on March 9 that it has won the right to release *Nanking*, a documentary film on the 1937 Nanking Incident. The company plans to release it in December this year in commemoration of 70th anniversary of the incident.

(7) Editorial: Comfort women issue-Doing nothing about falsified history is turning a blind eye to future trouble

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
March 10, 2007

A statement released by a one-time chief cabinet secretary over the comfort women issue has marred Japan's honor and has cast a shadow even on Japan-US relations. This situation is serious. Japan must resolutely reject any unreasonable political interpretation of facts in history and needs wisdom to avoid unnecessary diplomatic friction. In other words, Japan needs a strategic approach.

In that sense, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sincerely faced up to facts. In his Diet reply, Prime Minister Abe stated: "There is no evidence to endorse claims that government authorities used coercion." A South Korean woman, in her testimony in a public hearing of the US House of Representatives, testified that she was compelled by a Japanese man in military uniform to prostitute herself. However, she did not state that she was taken away by the Japanese military.

The point is whether there was state coercion over the comfort women issue or whether there was someone between brothels and girls who sold themselves.

However, the government, in its statement that came from then Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono, owned up to "the Imperial Japanese Army's roles" in setting up the brothels with no definitive evidence. The Kono statement therefore spread the wrong awareness that those women were "sex slaves" to the Japanese military. Prime Minister Abe has denied the claims. Then, US newspapers distorted what the prime minister really meant to say. This resulted in proliferating misunderstandings.

The prime minister tried to avoid bringing about further diplomatic minuses by indicating his intention to leave the matter to his ruling Liberal Democratic Party's investigation and study. US newspapers-often taking a pro-Chinese stance like the New York Times-are watching vigilantly for a chance to distort the prime

TOKYO 00001089 009 OF 011

minister's remarks. Once the prime minister gives them something to criticize, the Americans in general will be misled. That will please China and South Korea as they are attempting to come between Japan and the United States.

In particular, China embarked on an anti-Japanese campaign using the historical view issue as a weapon to block Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. China's anti-Japanese campaign came under fire from the US and European media when they became aware there was something questionable about it. Then, China changed course to win them over to its side. Some US newspapers were taken in by China.

Iris Chang's book, "The Rape of Nanking," contains a number of mistakes. The China Foundation for Human Rights Development presented her portrait bust to a famous American university. One of that Chinese organization's leaders said it would play up its propaganda toward the United States and Europe with its drive to blame Japan for its historical perception. This proves that their media was taken in.

The US House of Representatives is about to vote on a bill denouncing Japan over the comfort women issue, and the US newspapers continue to mislead their readers. There is no need for the prime minister to come out against such. Instead, the Japanese government should submit corrections each time. If Japan does nothing about their misunderstanding and exaggeration of facts in history, falsified history will have wings. That means to turn a blind eye to future trouble.

(8) Prime Minister Abe's remarks on comfort women issue come under fire from inside and outside Japan

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
March 11, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said that he upholds the 1993 statement by then Chief Cabinet Secretary on the comfort women issue, while denying that the Japanese military forced foreign women into sexual slavery "in the narrow sense". Not only Japan's

opposition parties and other Asian countries but also the US media have criticized Abe's position. The issue might become a new source of trouble for the Abe administration.

At a House of Councillors Budget Committee session on March 5, Abe stated: "In a broad sense there was coercion when brokers recruited the women, but there was no evidence of coercion by the government authorities in a narrow sense."

Abe made a similar statement also at last October's extraordinary Diet session in which he expressed his intention to stand by the Kono Statement. It is absolutely necessary for Abe as prime minister to follow the Kono Statement. Before assuming the prime minister's post, however, he made it clear that the government authorities' direct involvement in recruiting the comfort women that the Kono Statement acknowledged was not proved. Abe then tried to avoid the opposition's pursue of the issue by saying, "There is no coercion in a narrow sense."

Abe gave a similar explanation on March 5, as well. It is difficult for foreign countries to understand differences of nuances between "a narrow sense and a broad sense." In addition, he said the same day that he would not issue a fresh apology for the comfort women

TOKYO 00001089 010 OF 011

issue, even if Japan were urged to do so by a US congressional resolution that demands a clear apology from the Japanese government. This comment created a stir.

China and South Korea strongly reacted against Abe's remark, claiming, "The comfort women issue is a historical fact that the Japanese government should admit and bear its responsibility." The US media criticized the prime minister's position rather than commenting on whether there was coercion or not. The New York Times wrote: "Japan is only dishonored by such efforts to contort the truth."

Some lawmakers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are concerned about the future of Japan-US relations. Former Secretary General Koichi Kato commented: "The US has begun considering that the Abe administration is trying to avoid Japan's responsibility for the war."

When asked about his view on the comfort women issue at an Upper House Budget Committee session on March 9, Abe said: "I talked about the facts but my view was not correctly conveyed." He has capped his "narrow and broad sense" argument, but his argument will inevitably be pursued. Since he plans to visit the US in April for the first time since assuming office, he will likely need to give more explanations on the issue.

(9) Government decides to refrain from counterargument over comfort women issue

SANEKI (Page 3) (Excerpts)
March 10, 2007

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said yesterday that the government would refrain from openly criticizing a resolution currently under debate in the United States' House Committee on Foreign Affairs criticizing Japan over the so-called comfort women issue. Although the prime minister had repeatedly denied the Japanese Imperial Army coerced young women into sexual slavery and had indicated his intention of refusing to offer an apology even if the resolution was adopted, such remarks resulted in inviting fierce reactions from the US mass media. Reflecting on this, Abe has judged it unwise to "spread unproductive debate." This might help to prevent the resolution from being adopted.

In a House of Councillors Budget Committee meeting and an interview with reporters yesterday, Prime Minister Abe referred to US liberal newspapers intensifying criticism of his own remarks: "Since my statements have not been accurately reported, it might be the proper political judgment to prevent the debate from spreading."

He indicated that he would not step into the same ring, based on the

judgment even if he continued to make counterarguments, his real intention would not be conveyed, conversely resulting in stirring up more criticism of Japan in the US media.

Behind the prime minister's judgment is also this view, as a government source noted: "The more Japan argues back, the more the comfort women issue will be spotlighted, resulting in benefiting China and South Korea." Foreign Minister Taro Aso also commented in the meeting yesterday, "We are trying to avoid taking outstanding measures" to prevent the resolution in the US House from being adopted.

TOKYO 00001089 011 OF 011

But according to a government source, "Prime Minister Abe still desires to rewrite the Kono Statement." Given this, the government intends to support moves in the Liberal Democratic Party to uncover the details of the comfort women issue, such as the presentation of data detailing explanations by former comfort women. An LDP mid-ranking official takes the view that even if the resolution with no legal binding power is adopted in the US House of Representatives, "it will become easier for Japan to make counterarguments. It would provide an opportunity for Japan to review the Kono Statement, which was used by the House of Representatives as the basis for submitting the resolution."

SCHIEFFER